

# The Younger Set

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS,

Author of "The Fighting Chance," Etc.

Copyright, 1907, by Robert W. Chambers

I'm going to plant myself here on you."

"Don't notice him, Austin," said Nina; "he only wishes to be implored. And by the same token you'd both better let me implore you to dress!" She rose and bent forward in the firelight to peer at the clock. "Goodness! Do you creatures think I'm going to give Eileen half an hour's start with her maid and I carrying my twelve years' handicap too? No, indeed! I'm decrepit, but I'm going to die fighting. Austin, get up! You're horribly slow anyhow. Phil, Austin's man—such as he is—will be at your disposal, and your luggage is unpacked."

In the hallway Selwyn and Austin encountered a radiant and bewildering vision awaiting them—Eileen in all her glory.

"Wonderful!" said Gerard, patting the vision's rounded bare arm as he hurried past. "Fine gown, fine girl! But I've got to dress, and so has Philip." He meant well.

"Do you like it, Captain Selwyn?" asked the girl, turning to confront him where he had halted. "Gerard isn't coming, and I thought perhaps you'd be interested."

The formal, half patronizing compliment on his tongue's tip remained there unsaid. He stood still, touched by the faint underling wistfulness in the laughing voice that challenged his opinion, and something within him responded in time:

"Your gown is a beauty; such wonderful lace. Of course anybody would know it came straight from Paris or from some other celestial region."

She colored enchantingly and, with pretty, frank impulse, held out both her hands to him.

"You are . . . dear, Captain Selwyn! It is my first real dinner gown, and I'm quite mad about it, and somehow I wanted the family to share my madness with me. Nina will. She gave it to me, the darling. Austin admires it, too, of course, but he doesn't notice such things very closely, and Gerard isn't here. Thank you for letting me show it to you before I go down."

She gave both his hands a friendly little shake and, glancing down at her skirt in blissful consciousness of its perfection, stepped backward into her own room.

Later, while he stood at his dresser constructing an immaculate knot in his white tie, Nina knocked.

"Hurry, Phil! Oh, may I come in? You ought to be downstairs with us, you know. And it was very sweet of you to be so nice to Eileen. The child had tears in her eyes when I went in. Oh, just a single diamond drop in each. Your sympathy and interest did it. I think the child misses her father on an occasion such as this—the beginning of life, the first step out into the world. Men do not understand what it means to us. Gerald doesn't, I'm sure. I've been watching her, and I know the shadow of that dreadful tragedy falls on her more often than Austin and I are aware of. You are among your own people, anyhow!"

His own people! The impatient tenderness of his sister's words had been sounding in his ears all through the evening. They rang out clear and insistent amid the tumult of the dinner. He heard them in the laughing confusion of youthful voices. They stole into the delicate undertones of the music to mock him. The rustling of silk and lace repeated them. The high heels of satin slippers echoed them in irony.

His own people! The scent of overheated flowers, the sudden warm breeze eddying from a capricious fan, the mourning thrill of the violins, emphasized the emphasis of the words.

And they sounded sadder and more meaningless now to him, here in his own room, until the monotony of their recurrent mockery began to unnerve him.

He turned on the electricity, shrank from it, extinguished it. And for a long time he sat there in the darkness of early morning, his unfilled pipe clutched in his nerveless hand.

## Chapter 3

TO pick up once more and tighten and knot together the loosened threads which represented the unfinished record that his race had woven into the social fabric of the metropolis was merely an automatic matter for Selwyn.

His own people had always been among the makers of that fabric. Into part of its vast and intricate pattern they had woven an inconspicuously honorable record—chronicles of births and deaths and marriages, a plain memorandum of plain living and upright dealing with their fellow men.

Some public service of modest nature they had performed, not seeking it, not shirking, accomplishing it cleanly when it was intrusted to them.

His forefathers had been, as a rule, professional men—physicians and lawyers. His grandfather died under the walls of Chautauque castle while

twisting a tourniquet for a cursing dragon; an uncle remained indefinitely at Malvern Hill; an only brother at Montauk Point sickened in the trenches before Santiago.

His father's services as division medical officer in Sheridan's cavalry had been perhaps no more devoted, no more loyal than the services of thousands of officers and troopers, and his reward was a pension offer, declined. He practiced until his wife died, then retired to his country home, from which house his daughter Nina was married to Austin Gerard.

Mr. Selwyn, Sr., continued to pay his taxes on his father's house in Tenth street, voted in that district, spent a month every year with the Gerards and judiciously enlarged the family reservation in Greenwood, whither he retired in due time.

The first gun off the Florida keys sent Selwyn's only brother from his law office in hot haste to San Antonio.

That same gun interrupted Selwyn's connection with Neergard & Co., operators in Long Island real estate, and a year later the captaincy offered him in a western volunteer regiment operating on the island of Leyte completed the rupture.

And now he was back again, a chance career ended, with option of picking up the severed threads—his inheritance at the loom—and of retying them, warp and weft, and continuing the pattern according to the designs of the tufted, tinted pile yarn knotted in by his ancestors before him.

Meanwhile he was looking for two things—an apartment and a job—the first energetically combated by his immediate family.

It was rather odd—the scarcity of jobs. Of course Austin offered him one, which Selwyn declined at once, enraging his brother-in-law.

"But what do I know about the investment of trust funds?" demanded Selwyn. "You wouldn't take me if I were not your wife's brother, and that's nepotism."

Austin's harmless fury raged for nearly ten minutes, after which he cheered up, relighted his cigar and resumed his discussion with Selwyn concerning the merits of various boys' schools, the victim in prospective being Billy.

A little later, reverting to the subject of his own enforced idleness, Selwyn said, "I've been on the point of going to see Neergard, but somehow I can't quite bring myself to it—slinking into his office as a rank failure in one profession to ask him if he has any use for me again."

"Stuff and fancy!" growled Gerard. "It's all stuff and fancy about your being any kind of a failure. If you want to resume with that Dutchman, go to him and say so. If you want to invest anything in his Long Island schemes he'll take you in fast enough. He took in Gerald and some twenty thousand."

"Isn't he very prosperous, Austin?" "Very—on paper. Long Island farm lands and mortgages on Hampton hen-coops are not fragrant propositions to me. But there's always one more way of making a living after you counted 'em all up on your fingers. If you've any capital to offer Neergard, he won't shrink for help."

"But isn't suburban property?" "On the jump? Yes—both ways. Oh, I suppose that Neergard is all right. If he wasn't I wouldn't have permitted Gerald to go into it. Neergard sticks to his commissions and doesn't back his fancy in certified checks. I don't know exactly how he operates. I only know that we find nothing in that sort of thing for our own account. But Fane, Harmon & Co. do. That's their affair too. It's all a matter of taste, I tell you."

Selwyn reflected: "I believe I'd go and see Neergard if I were perfectly sure of my personal sentiments toward him. He's been civil enough to me, of course, but I have always had a curious feeling about Neergard—that he's forever on the edge of doing something—doubtful."

"His business reputation is all right. He shaves the dead line like a safety razor, but he's never yet cut through it. On principle, however, look out for an apple faced Dutchman with a thin nose and no lips. Neither Jew, Yankee nor American stands any chance in a deal with that type of financier. Personally my feeling is this: If I've got to play games with Julius Neergard, I'd prefer to be his partner. And so I told Gerald. By the way—"

Austin checked himself, looked down at his cigar, turned it over, and over several times, then continued quietly: "By the way, I suppose Gerald is like other young men of his age and times—immersed in his own affairs—thoughtless perhaps, perhaps a trifle selfish in the cross country gallop after pleasure. I was rather severe with him about his neglect of his sister. He ought to have come here to pay his respects to you too."

"Oh, don't put such notions into his head!"

"Yes, I will," insisted Austin. "How ever indifferent and thoughtless and selfish he is to other people, he's got to be considerate toward his own family, and I told him so. Have you seen him lately?"

"No-o," admitted Selwyn.

"Not since the first time when he came to do the civil by you?"

"No, but don't!"

"Yes, I will," repeated his brother-in-law, "and I'm going to have a thorough explanation with him and learn what he's up to. He's got to be decent to his sister. He ought to report to me occasionally. That's all there is to it. He has entirely too much liberty, with his bachelor quarters and his junior whippersnapper club and his house parties and his cruises on Neergard's boat!"

He got up, casting his cigar from him, and moved about bulkily, muttering of matters to be regulated, and firmly too. But Selwyn, looking out of the window across the park, knew perfectly well that young Erroll, now of age, with a small portion of his handsome income at his mercy, was past the regulating stage and beyond the authority of Austin. There was no harm in him. He was simply a joyous, pleasure loving cub, chock full of energetic instincts, good and bad, right and wrong, out of which, formed from the acts which become habits, character matures. This was his estimate of Gerald.

The next morning, riding in the park with Eileen, he found a chance to speak cordially of her brother.

"I've meant to look up Gerald," he said, as though the neglect were his own fault, "but every time something happens to switch me on to another track."

"I'm afraid that I do a great deal of the switching," she said, "don't I? But you've been so nice to me and to the children that—"

Miss Erroll's horse was behaving badly, and for a few moments she became too thoroughly occupied with her mount to finish her sentence.

The belted groom galloped up, prepared for emergencies, and he and Selwyn sat their saddles watching a pretty battle for mastery between a beautiful horse determined to be bad and a very determined young girl who had decided he was going to be good.

Once or twice the excitement of solicitude sent the color flying into Selwyn's temples. The bride path was narrow and stiff with freezing sand, and the trees were too near for such lively maneuvers, but Miss Erroll had made up her mind, and Selwyn already had a humorous idea that this was no light matter. The horse found it serious enough, too, and suddenly concluded to be good. And the pretty scene ended so abruptly that Selwyn laughed aloud as he rejoined her.

"There was a man—Boots Lansing—in Bannard's command. One night on Samar the bolo men rushed us, and Lansing got into the six foot major's boots by mistake—seven leaguers, you know—and his horse bucked him clean out of them."

"Hence his Christian name, I suppose," said the girl. "But why such a story, Captain Selwyn? I believe I stuck to my saddle."

"With both hands," he said cordially, always alert to plague her, for she was adorable when teased, especially in the beginning of their acquaintance before she had found out that it was a habit of his, and her bright confusion always delighted him into further mischief.

"But I wasn't a bit worried," he continued. "You had him so firmly around the neck. Besides, what horse or man could resist such a pleading pair of arms around the neck?"

"What you saw," she said, flushing up, "is exactly the way I shall do any pleading with the two animals you mention."

Later she remarked, "It's just as Nina says, after all, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," he replied suspiciously. "What?"

"That Gerald isn't really very wicked, but he likes to have us think so. It's a sign of extreme self consciousness, isn't it," she added innocently, "when a man is afraid that a woman thinks he is very, very good?"

"That," he said, "is the limit. I'm going to ride by myself."

Her pleasure in Selwyn's society had gradually become such genuine pleasure, her confidence in his kindness so unaffectedly sincere, that insensibly she had fallen into something of his manner of badinage—especially since she realized how much amusement he found in her own smiling confusion when unexpectedly assailed. Also, to her surprise, she found that he could be plagued very easily, though she did not quite dare it at first, in view of his impressive years and experience.

But, once goaded to it, she was astonished to find how suddenly it seemed to readjust their personal relations—years and experience falling from his shoulders like a cloak which had concealed a man very nearly her own age, years and experience adding themselves to her, and at least an inch to her stature to redress the balance between them.

It had amused him immensely as he realized the subtle change, and it pleased him, too, because no man of thirty-five cares to be treated like a grandfather by a girl of nineteen, even if she has not yet worn the polish from her first pair of high heeled shoes.

"It's astonishing," he said, "how little respect infirmity and age command in these days."

"I do respect you," she insisted, "especially your infirmity of purpose. You said you were going to ride by yourself. But, do you know, I don't believe you are of a particularly solitary disposition. Are you?"

He laughed at first, then suddenly his face fell.

"Not from choice," he said under his breath. Her quick ear heard, and she turned, semi-serious, questioning him with raised eyebrows.

"Nothing," he was just muttering. "I've a villainous habit of muttering mischievous nothings."

"You did say something!"

"No—only zebullish gabble, the mere

murky mouthings of a meager mind." "You did. It's rude not to repeat it when I ask you."

"I didn't mean to be rude."

"Then repeat what you said to yourself."

"Do you wish me to?" he asked, raising his eyes so gravely that the smile faded from lip and voice when she



Gerald Erroll.

answered: "I beg your pardon, Captain Selwyn. I did not know you were serious."

"Oh, I'm not," he returned lightly. "I'm never serious. No man who soliloquizes can be taken seriously. Don't you know, Miss Erroll, that the crowning absurdity of all tragedy is the soliloquy?"

Her smile became delightfully uncertain. She did not quite understand him, though her instinct warned her that for a second something had menaced their understanding.

Riding forward with him through the crisp sunshine of mid-December, the word "tragedy" still sounding in her ears, her thoughts reverted naturally to the only tragedy besides her own which had ever come very near to her—his own.

Could he have meant that? Did people mention such things after they had happened? Did they not rather conceal them, hide them deeper and deeper with the aid of time and the kindly years for a burial past all recollection?

Troubled, uncomfortably intent on evading every thought or train of ideas evoked, she put her mount to a gallop. But thought kept pace with her.

(To be continued.)

Persian Easy Language to Learn.

Persian is said to be not a very difficult language. The modern Persian is very much like the English in its sensible rejection of the inflections that burden so many of the world's tongues.

## JUST A MINUTE

Of your time will be required to read this advertisement, but it will take considerably more time for you to make a critical inspection of our very complete stock of

## Furniture and Undertaking

and you will find here all the new things in every line. Furthermore, the exceedingly moderate prices we have placed on all goods is a special inducement that you cannot overlook.

## HALL & ECTON, Furniture, - - - Rugs.

## GAS STOVES!

The cool nights remind us that it's time for Heaters. We have a great variety of Gas Heaters, guaranteed to give satisfaction.

Come and see us if you want a Gas or Coal Stove. Examine our line before purchasing elsewhere.

## Grant Witt & Co.,

30 N. Main St., - Winchester, Ky.

## To Start the Ball Rolling

### The Star Is Offering INDUCEMENTS!

FIRST - CLASS and up-to-date

Clothing, Dry Goods, Shoes and Furnishings at a saving of 10 to 20 per cent. Just think of it in the very nick of time when you must have the goods, as the old version—"A friend in need is a friend indeed."

We are ready and willing to show you the greatest and best line of merchandise ever brought to this city, at a great saving.

Come and see our line of Clothing for Men, Boys and Children.

Come and see our line of Shoes and Rubber Goods for Men, Women and Children. We guarantee quality and price on every pair.

Come and see our line of Cloaks, Furs and Ready-made Skirts. It is to your interest to do so.

We Guarantee to Give You \$1.20 in Merchandise for \$1.00 Cash. For a Sample Price for You to Go By, We Are Selling Men's 50c Underwear (Fleeced or Ribbed) for 40c; Ladies' 25c Ribbed Underwear for 20c.

YOURS FOR BUSINESS

## The Star

DRY GOODS, CLOTHING AND SHOE HOUSE,

A. FELD, Proprietor.

NEXT TO WINCHESTER DRUG CO.

NO MORE



HALF SOLEING

R.P. SMITH & SONS CO. CHICAGO IMPERISHABLE SOLE TRADE MARK

No more half-soleing if you wear Imperishable Sole Work Shoes. Imperishable Sole Shoes will outwear any two or more ordinary soles. This sole leather is tanned by a new process that makes it the greatest wearing leather ever made. Every man should see them. Every pair of Imperishable Sole Shoes has the above trade-mark stamped on the soles. Be sure and get the genuine.

We are Sole Agents for this Particular Shoe

As well as the Packard Shoe for Men. Also the Sachs Manufacturing Shoes for Ladies. We also sell the Red School House Shoe for Misses and Children. Every pair we sell is guaranteed. All we want you to do is to give us a call.

OUR AIM IS TO MAKE A PATRON OF YOU AND TO HOLD YOU.